

Health Alert
Increased Occurrence of Lymphogranuloma Venereum
CDC Requests Specific Testing

Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV) is a rare and potentially serious sexually transmitted disease that has been diagnosed recently in patients in San Francisco and Atlanta.

The Division of Sexually Transmitted Diseases Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is establishing enhanced surveillance to detect cases of LGV in the United States. If you suspect a patient of having LGV, CDC requests that you submit clinical specimens and complete a questionnaire.

Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV) is a systemic, sexually transmitted disease caused by a variety of the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis* (genotypes L1, L2, and L3). Outbreaks in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe (Belgium, France, and Sweden) have involved men who have sex with men (MSM).

LGV can cause scarring of the genitals and colon, and can cause inguinal lymph glands to swell or burst. Symptoms of LGV can include: small, painless genital or rectal papules that ulcerate; tender unilateral or bilateral inguinal or femoral lymphadenopathy that become fluctuant (buboes); mucous or purulent anal discharge; rectal bleeding; constipation; anal spasms and tenesmus.

The patients in the outbreak in the Netherlands were MSM. The majority were HIV positive and had symptoms similar to inflammatory bowel disease, including rectal bleeding. So far there is no indication that HIV-positive patients are at higher risk for complications from LGV. There is concern that a patient with LGV might be more prone to contract HIV because of the associated ulceration.

Diagnosis of LGV is based primarily on clinical findings. Commercial testing includes serology for *Chlamydia trachomatis*, or direct Chlamydia testing of the lesions by culture or nonculture nucleic acid testing. However, neither is specific for LGV. Treatment for LGV requires three weeks of doxycycline or erythromycin.

CDC would like to test samples from patients that clinicians suspect may have LGV. Please contact your local county or tribal health department, or the Arizona Department of Health Services STD Control Program (602-364-4666), for details about how to collect and send clinical specimens and to obtain the accompanying questionnaire.

Information about the LGV outbreak in the Netherlands, and treatment recommendations for LGV can be found in the Oct. 29, 2004 Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Oct. 29, 2004; *Lymphogranuloma Venereum Among Men Who Have Sex with Men - Netherlands, 2003 – 2004*, or at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5342a2.htm>.

Thank you for your cooperation in this surveillance effort.